

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1688

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: REVOLUTIONARY PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE RACE REMAINS
IN DOUBT

REF: GUATEMALA'S A-74

SUMMARY: PR' S APRIL 1 PRIMARIES HAVE RESULTED IN NECK- AND-
NECK RACE BETWEEN SECRETARY GENERAL CARLOS SAGASTUME AND
COLONEL RAFAEL ARRIAGA WITH OUTCOME STILL UNCERTAIN.
CONTEST PEPPERED WITH UNIVERSAL ACCUSATIONS OF FRAUD, WHICH
TURE IN LARGE PART. SAGASTUME STILL APPEARS TO HAVE EDGE,
WITH GOG STANDING IN WINGS TO HELP HIM IF NECESSARY, BUT
MESSINESS OF FIGHT WILL FURTHER TARNISH HIS IMAGE AS A
REVOLUTIONARY LEADER AND GIVE ADDED STRENGTH TO THE
LEFT OPPOSITION, PRIMARILY THE FURD. END SUMMARY

1. APRIL 1 PRIMARY ELECTIONS IN PR' S WARDS THROUGHOUT
GUATEMALA HELD AS SCHEDULED TO SELECT PLEDGED DELEGATES
FOR APRIL 14 NOMINATING CONVENTION. PRIMARIES APPARENTLY
EXCITED LITTLE ENTHUSIASM AMONG PARTY' S GRASS- ROOTS, ATTRACTING
ATTENTION ONLY OF SUPPORTERS OF THE THREE PRE- CANDIDATES
(SAGASTUME, ARRIAGA, AND GENERAL ROLANDO CHINCHILLA)
AND MESA LIMPIA (OPEN CONVENTION) GROUP LED BY ALBERTO
FUENTES MOHR. SINCE APRIL 1, BOTH SAGASTUME AND ARRIAGA
HAVE CLAIMED VICTORY WHILE ACCUSING EACH OTHER OF STEALING
VOTES. GEN. CHINCHILLA, WHOSE VOTE TALLY APPEARS TO TRAIL
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FAR BEHIND SAGASTUME AND ARRIAGA, ALSO DENOUNCING FRAUD AND SAYS HE WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN APRIL 14 CONVENTION WHICH HE CALLS RIGGED CONTEST. MESA LIMPIA GROUP APPERAS TO HAVE FARED BETTER THAN CHINCHILLA, ALTHOUGH PARTISANS TELL US THAT THEY ARE LOSING MANY VOTES TO SAGASTUME AND ARRIAGA THROUGH FRAUD.

2. WHILE IT WAS ORIGINALLY EXPECTED THAT APRIL 1 VOTE WOULD CLEARLY INDICATE RESULTS OF APRIL 14 TH CONVENTION, THE PRIMARY WHICH WAS FROUGHT WITH IRREGULARITIES, DID NOT PRODUCE A SOLID MAJORITY FOR ANY CANDIDATE, AND SAGASTUME AND ARRIAGA FORCES HAVE BEEN MANUEVERING TO BUY, STEAL, OR THREATEN WAY TO VICTORY EVER SINCE. SAGASTUME IS EXPECTED TO CLAIM VICTORY TODAY, AND ARRIAGA HAS ALREADY ASSERTED HE WON. WE NOW DOUBT THAT FINAL RESULT WILL BE KNOWN UNTIL APRIL 14 TH, IF THEN. WHILE CHINCHILLA APPEARS TO HAVE ABANDONED THE BATTLE, THE MESA LIMPIA GROUP PLANS TO ATTEND CONVENTION IN ORDER TO DENOUNCE SAGASTUME' S LEADERSHIP. IF VOTE BETWEEN SAGASTUME AND ARRIAGA IS CLOSE, WE ARE TOLD, MESA LIMPIA PRESENTLY INTENDS TO THROW THEIR VOTES TO ARRIAGA. THEIR THEORY IS THAT WITH A MAN OF ARRIAGA' S RIGHTIST REPUTATION AS PR CANDIDATE, THEY WOULD BE IN BETTER POSITION TO WOO PR RANK AND FILE INTO LEFTIST COALITION.

3. GOG FOR ITS PART IS LOOKING FOR A SAGASTUME VICTORY BECAUSE IT BELIEVES THIS OFFERS BEST OPPORTUNITY FOR KEEPING LEFT DIVIDED, WHEREAS ARRIAGA WOULD ONLY DRAW MLN VOTES FROM COALITION CANDIDATE LAUGERUD. PID LABOR MINISTER LOPEZ RIVERA TOLD AMBASSADOR RECENTLY THAT IF SAGASTUME LOSES TO ARRIAGA, GOG WILL ANNUL CONVENTION AND GIVE SAGASTUME ANOTHER CHANCE.

4. COMMENT: THE PR CONVENTION FIGHT HAS DONE NOTHING TO BOLSTER THE PARTY' S ALREADY SAGGING REPUTATION AS A VEHICLE OF REFORMISM. THE CONTEST, FOUGHT ON THE LEAST EDIFYING LEVEL OF POLITICS BETWEEN A RIGHTIST WHO ORIGINALLY TRIED TO RUN ON THE MLN TICKET (ARRIAGA), AND A LACK LUSTER OLD PARTY WAR HORSE (SAGASTUME), HAS LEFT MODERATE REFORMERS, REPRESENTED BY THE CHINCHILLA CANDIDACY, AND LIBERAL REFORMERS, FOLLOWING FUENTES MOHR, OUT IN THE COLD. THE PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES OF THIS SITUATION WILL BE THE FURD
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AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS BOTH OF WHICH ARE SEEKING THE

MANTLE OF MEANINGFUL OPPOSITION.
BOWDLER

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